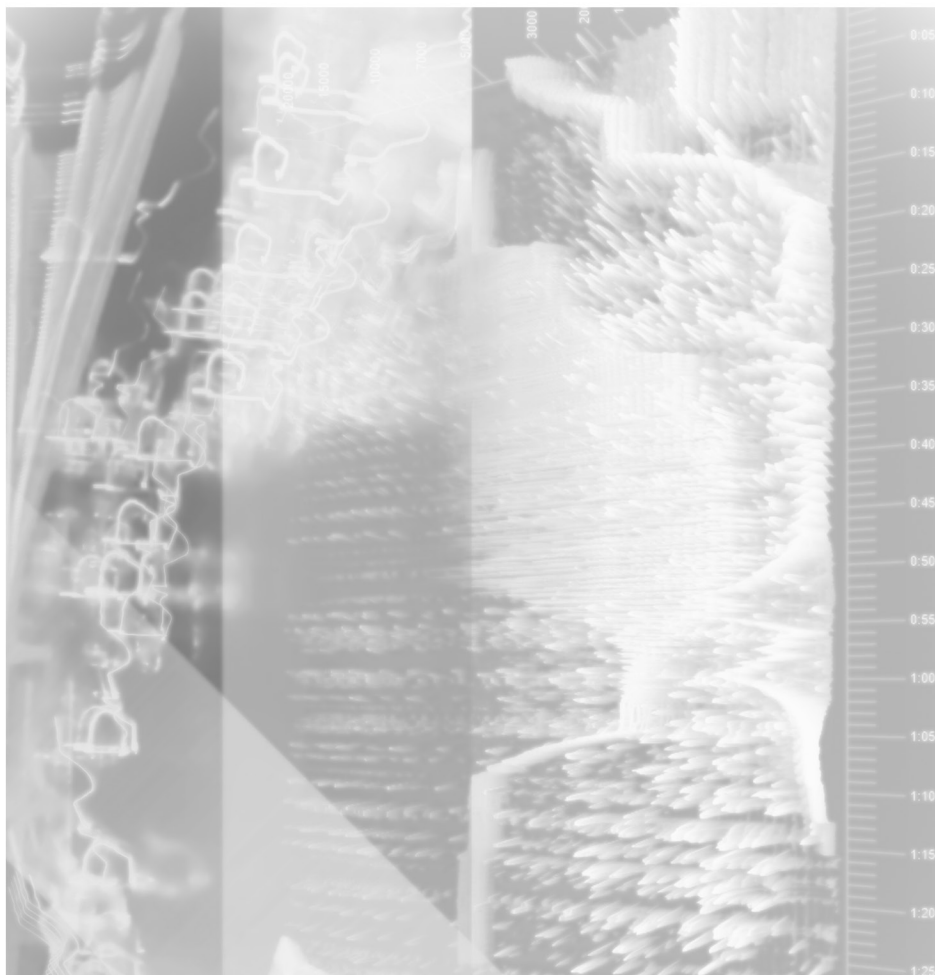


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**Propositions from the history of the radio as *atelier*: imagining a new radio and a new listener in the life of the *Atelier de création radiophonique* of Radio France**

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# PROPOSITIONS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE RADIO AS ATELIER: IMAGINING A NEW RADIO AND A NEW LISTENER IN THE LIFE OF THE *ATELIER DE CRÉATION RADIOPHONIQUE* OF RADIO FRANCE

## KEYWORDS

*L'Atelier de création radiophonique* (France Culture); radio art; radio documentary; *Ars Acustica*; radio programs (France); public service broadcasting radio (France); *création sonore*; France Culture, Radio France; Alain Trutat; René Farabet; documentary arts (audio and radio).

## ABSTRACT

This article offers an encounter with one of twentieth century radio's great artistic and exploratory sites, the *Atelier de création radiophonique (ACR)* of Radio France. This Atelier was envisaged from its outset as a program dedicated to experiment and research. According to the proposal, drafted in 1968 by Alain Trutat and Jean Tardieu (poet, Director, France Culture), a new space was required which might continue the (broken) tradition of experimentation established with the earlier Studio' and Club d'Essai (1942–1960) from which Pierre Schaeffer developed his *musique concrète*. The ACR went to air on October 5, 1969 and its propositions to the listener and contributions to the world of radio would be fundamentally different. Already by the early 1970s, this 'show' was attracting interest internationally – its works were achieving critical acclaim. The ACR's influence continued to grow as this *chantier* (building site) increased its interactions with the wider radio ecology, particularly within public service media circles. Yet, the impacts and legacies of the program have received insufficient critical attention, even as a new idea of the listener, the radio documentary and film sonore were proposed here by the program's core producer-artist-thinkers – including Trutat, René Farabet, Yann Paranthoën and Kaye Mortley. This article offers an introduction to this program, providing an overview and contextualisation, while also highlighting the ways in which the ACR lived up to that initial challenge (1968): to be something “more” than “art”; to respond and explore in new ways, and with sound, the “key subjects of our time” (1968 Proposal). This atelier would participate in history as well as reflect upon it, creating “broadcast events” and acoustically rich works that would be original, surprising, provocative. This essay documents some of the distinguishing aspects of a project that evolved over a 30-year period, drawing on the author's oral history interviews (with key figures), plus primary and other research conducted in France and in Australia from 2003 to 2017 – in many cases assisted by these same audio-visionaries.

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This article seeks to make an encounter with the experiments and philosophical ideas that emerged from one of twentieth century radio's great artistic and exploratory sites, the *Atelier de création radiophonique* (ACR) of Radio France. This weekly program was launched within the French national broadcaster, France Culture, under the direction of Alain Trutat in 1969. Its brief at the time as a program and as a space was to imagine and broadcast new forms of radio, to cross boundaries in craft and genre, and re-invent or create new dialogues with radio's older forms while sounding out possible futures. In doing this the program should, as the figure of the artist's atelier suggests, offer "a space where one might be invited to try out ideas freely," and "see things in the process of being made" (Farabet 2003, in Madsen 2001–2004). As one long-time sound engineer for the *Atelier* also recalled: "It was truly an atelier where everyone has their hammers and nails. When something doesn't work, you can pull out the nails and begin again"<sup>1</sup> (Creis in Madsen 2017). Under the foundational leadership of Trutat and René Farabet – the latter Producteur-Coordonateur de l'ACR de France-Culture, Radio France (1969–2001) – this site was able to make an important contribution to the wider radio arts internationally, with impacts and legacies that have barely received enough attention, especially not outside of France.

My interest in this space where experiment was foregrounded and ideas of radio-phonetic art also coalesced, comes from around 15 years of direct interactions with the program while it was in operation (1986–2001) and when working for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). I was a producer with ABC Radio's Arts Unit (producing for Radio National and ABC FM), and in a freelance capacity over many years, coming into contact with ACR work and producers through programming and through events and visits. This paper also draws on archival research conducted at L'Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA), the French Bibliothèque Nationale and Radio France's own program archives. It draws on other sources where the ACR's work can be located as many productions were also adapted and broadcast internationally: for example, by the ABC – and thus ACR programs are part of the ABC's historical record. They are also a part of other broadcasters' entangled histories as they disseminated selections of ACR output. Additionally, this article benefits from extended oral history interviews, connections and conversations recorded with some of the core audio-visionaries of the period of the ACR (to 2001) (René Farabet, Kaye Mortley, Alain Trutat, Yann Paranthoën) and includes reflection from sound engineer Michel Creis and assistant producer Janine Antoine. (Antoine was a member of the working group of the *Atelier de Création Radiophonique* since its inception and Creis since 1970). It is important here to highlight the connection and access opened by the presence of Australian radio *auteur* Kaye Mortley, who after working for the ABC from 1974–1979 left her country of birth and moved to Paris to join the *Atelier*, becoming a long-time producer. She continued to make freelance works for the radio in several languages and for multiple broadcasters, including

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<sup>1</sup> "C'était vraiment un atelier où tout le monde en avait les marteaux des clous et on y allait tout. Quand ça n'allait pas, on arraché les clous, on recommence." Michel Creis. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

ABC (see Madsen 2024, in Beaufile, Deleu, Héron 2024). My subject here is also inspired by the Editor of this special issue, who in her call for papers references the “40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Radio Belgrade’s *Sound Workshop (Radionica zvuka)*”. She suggested the Belgrade site acted as a kind of trigger for the Issue’s theme – radio art.

## Development of new radio art and electronic music spaces in Post-World War 2 radio

In European State and PSB radio stations, we find a long and productive history of artists of various forms and mediums creating for the radio, with many of these artists and radio producers working in these stations and for these institutions drawn to forge new kinds of radiophonic work, later also electronic music experiences, some engaging with literature and writing, while others more with musical/sound and sound-text composition plus performance. There are yet others invoking traditions of broadcast reportage and documentary in their audio arts and as part of the new practices they developed. In the Post-World War II period exploratory studio spaces were established within numerous state and national PSB organisations. A number of these were designed for making extended works where voices and music, sounds and actuality (as the Germans termed this, *Original Ton* or *O-Ton*) might be recorded, mixed and edited to create new forms of radiophonic expression. These spaces (and not only for radio drama or music) were in time equipped with an array of new sound technologies: these developed for recording, mixing, processing, and transmission. Advances in recording from the 1950s to the 1970s were enabled by new precision microphones too, developed with differing capacities and patterns. In time, mono to stereo transmission meant new ways of recording, production, reception, along with higher quality sound achievable for listeners. The 1968 Proposal for an *Atelier* to be created within ORTF and France Culture, for example, states that it was an opportune moment to propose this new program offered in the new “Frequency modulation” or a “compatible Stereophony” and oriented towards “*la création radiophonique pure*”, and “new works and talents” (Tardieu and Trutat 1968, 149).

Magnetic tape machines (pioneered and used during the war by the Nazis) were adopted widely by broadcasting organisations upon their discovery and after the fall of Germany when they were developed further, in all cases (but at different times) replacing earlier disc and wire recording, so allowing radio programs to be easily edited, layered and montaged.<sup>2</sup> Mono (¼ inch) and later stereo, plus new high quality portable tape recorders, then later multi-track recording, would revolutionise program and pro-

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<sup>2</sup> As Richard Kostelanetz reminds us, along with discs prior to World War II: “sound was recorded on continuous wire that, while it could be cut, it could not be spliced easily. That is, its parts could not be reassembled without making thunderous tell-tale sounds. Precisely because acoustic tape, by contrast, could be spliced gracefully, sounds separately recorded could be fused without distracting interruptions” (1990, 293).

duction practices, especially in drama, features and music, and the audio arts as this field developed. The importance of tape and the new kinds of construction possible because of it should not be downplayed when addressing the arts of the radio forged here – especially significant for the ACR, and the radiophonic imaginaries that this atelier and its creators proposed and explored, even into the digital era (Farabet 2011, 15).

By the 1950s and 1960s, ‘radio labs’ and ‘studios’ opened across multiple countries or became sites for continuing experiments with *musique concrète* and related but also divergent electronic forms of music. Increasingly complex and multipurpose mixing desks ensured kinds of sonic creativity and control over sound not possible before the 1960s, with electronic devices enhancing the ability of artists, producers (and their collaborators) to process and manipulate audio and specific sounds in unexpected and diverse ways. We know this was the case for the music world leading to a revolution in music, but so much less has been documented or charted in radio in this regard. These *essais* or experiments might be aimed at artistically inclined radiophonic productions, and they supported television projects with musical themes and effects. European radio was most active here from the late 1950s.

Italian composers Luciano Berio and Bruno Maderna founded and directed an experimental radio studio for Radio Audizioni Italiane (RAI) in Milan, the *Studio di Fonologia*. This was established within Italian national radio in 1955 and was influenced in part by Pierre Schaeffer’s and Pierre Henry’s research: one of its special foci however was to be the voice, in particular the singing voice. The Polish Radio Experimental Studio was launched in 1957 and was active until 2004. Like the BBC’s *Radiophonic Workshop* launched a short time after, this Warsaw Studio within the state radio was tasked with creating new sounds for radio and television, and like other electronic music studios launched elsewhere in European and Scandinavian radio institutions, it envisioned itself as “a hub for the production of electronic music” (Bohlman 2020, 717). It was also “the first space of its kind behind the Iron Curtain” (Jiricka in Crowley 2019, 271). The first German (NWDR to become WDR, West German Radio) Cologne studio for electronic music opened much earlier of course, in 1951 directed by Herbert Eimert. Karlheinz Stockhausen took the reins as its second director in 1962, advancing the making of electronic music, but also producing from audio archives new forms of “radio music” and radiogenic performance works: e.g. his astounding *Hymnen* (1966–1967) which features manipulated and montaged/layered recordings of national anthems from around the world, with many of these (167) different anthems sourced from WDR’s own radio archives. Former ABC Classic FM producer Stephen Adams described this form of radio art as “radio music,” naming *Hymnen* a prime example of the genre. This is an art associated with the radio first and foremost: the resulting recording or transmission “provides its own context” (which is the radio), he explained. For Adams, the parameters for any art of the radio includes this distinction: “Radio arts and music work exist apart from other performance contexts. They define radio spaces which are virtual spaces” (Adams in Madsen 2015).

The BBC's *Radiophonic Workshop*, also influenced by the French *musique concrète*, was launched in 1958, although it would soon be understood as largely a site designed to provision various areas and departments of the BBC (including television) with music and special effects, assisting in a range of performance productions and genres of program. It is important to add here however that this Workshop's inception had been spurred on by the productions of the Radio Drama and Features Departments within BBC Radio, and their championing of new features and radio play forms and especially those (largely) modernist works produced from the late 1950s, e.g., Beckett's BBC radio productions such as *All That Fall* (1957) and *Embers* (1959) supported and directed by Donald McWhinnie and others (see McWhinnie 1959). There are numerous producers' works that also engaged with the *Radiophonic Workshop*<sup>3</sup> with some radio drama productions gaining an entire score through this collaboration.<sup>4</sup> The producers of BBC features and documentaries and drama were also responsive to the new technologies and techniques available for making their sound plays and creative documentary features, including approaches that were made possible working with tape, plus electronics and *musique concrète* experimentation. This workshop collaborated with producers and artists for these kinds of programs then, but particularly as these experiments were supported within the BBC's cultural Third Programme, a channel launched late in 1946 to prioritise arts and culture in its programming and in its production: "The Third Programme set itself up as an enormous idealistic experiment...making the best of culture available to everybody... It was culture not just music" (Kenyon, Nicholas, BBC Controller Radio 3, 1992–1998, in BBC Four, 2005). Here producers could more easily create, collaborate and experiment because they were given the resources and they now had greater time and opportunities for making serious artistic genres plus a range of more elaborated forms.

Contextually, The Third Programme opens up a new ecosystem favouring experiment in a range of forms for radio, also ensuring a level of commissioning and production that opened the space to new and established writers, actors, composers and artists. As Kenyon recalls in a documentary (2005) commemorating this BBC cultural channel: "Each evening could be constructed as a work of art... it wasn't something that you casually had on in the background" (BBC Four 2005). Plays and documentaries here became less live affairs (as they had been) and increasingly pre-recorded (edited) works (more like film productions) that were cut, voiced and mixed/layered in new ways, including with the use of effects and music specially composed or produced for the work. Field recordings or sound sourced on location also became a more integral part of some productions. In time, this distinctive BBC channel influenced

<sup>3</sup> Barry Bermange's four sound collages he labelled *Inventions for Radio* (BBC 1964–1967) was a series of works composed with field sounds and 'ordinary people's' voices he had collected and recorded from life. These pieces which play between art and a kind of documentary poetry were made with the sound designer/composer Delia Derbyshire of the *Radiophonic Workshop*. See *Radiophonic Workshop Audio*, n.d. and Butler 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Not all work was modernist. Malcolm Clarke of the BBC *Radiophonic Workshop* contributed a score to John Tydeman's production of *Hamlet* broadcast on BBC Radio 3, 31 October 1971.

other broadcasters, who took similar steps in their programs, or in some cases whole networks or outlets dedicated to culture were established, modelled on The Third. Here we can identify RAI's Terzo Programma and the French national outlet, France Culture, established in December 1963. Most notably this *chaîne* would become the natural home of the ACR. Writing in 1968, in their proposal, Tardieu and Trutat describe the public for the ACR and France Culture as being "between the 'Third Programm' of the BBC and that of the old *Club d'Essai* of the RTF" (1968, 149). France Culture continues today, although without its *Atelier de création radiophonique*.

By the 1970s (and perhaps a kind of parallel development to the ACR), a distinctive 'Studio' within the decentralised German public broadcasting system (ARD) proposed the *Neue Hörspiel*, or 'New Hearplay' and this would mix art and drama and music. (*Hörspiel* was the term used for sound drama in German radio, although the term is broader than the English close equivalent of 'radio play'). This new experimentation was particularly promoted by Klaus Schöning from the late 1960s, who directed his own studio at Westdeutsche Rundfunk Köln (WDR), the Studio Akustische Kunst. Schöning engaged modernist composers and artists from Germany and around the world to make for his Studio while retrieving much earlier produced works of acoustic art from the annals of oblivion, for example broadcasting Cage's early radio works, and that of Weimar pioneer Walter Ruttmann (who adopted the term "acoustical film" as he had used a special technique of optical sound film to not only create movies in the 1930s, but also radio *sans images*). Schöning proposed or proclaimed the *Hörspielmacher* for his expanded radio art which responded to new forms of sound-text poetry and acoustic sculpture. For Schöning and others attracted to work in this space, the figure of the *Hörspielmacher* represents a new kind of radio author – perhaps a writer (dramatist, poet...) but also likely to be a composer-director or a builder-sculptor (Schöning 1991, 322; Schöning 1969; 1970). These spaces opened to conceptual, fluxus and 'new media' artists, with new works commissioned from Cage and other 20<sup>th</sup> century arts luminaries (Kostelanetz 1990). In this 1970s period, we might add that ACR Director René Farabet explored similar ways of approaching the radio as artists' space, working at times even with the same *Hörspielmacher*s as Schöning.<sup>5</sup> From almost the first program, Trutat and Farabet invited artists into their atelier, making adapted works of *Neues Hörspiel* and other forms, blurring the boundaries of the radio play and music theatre, of sound poetry, music and sound art, but also documentary. A good example is Argentinian Maurizio Kagel's *Inversion of America (l'Inversion de l'Amerique)* produced for WDR (1975–1976) and broadcast on the ACR on January 8, 1978. Interestingly, this text dealing with the savagery of conquest by the Spanish in the Americas remained in German for the ACR's

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5 Schöning's Studio proposed a new autonomous "language of acoustic art" in which "the spoken word, sound effects, music, and documentary sound in every possible guise are co-equal constitutive materials of an artistic composition" (Schöning 1991, 316–317). This requirement for "equality" of these elements appears quite prescriptive: his proclamation of achieving a "true acoustic art" contrasts with the ACR's more playful, heuristic approach and its mixing of more traditional radio but also film genres. There is a common stress nevertheless on the idea that these new radio artists might use radio "productively", not just "reproductively" here (Ibid., 321).

presentation, a simultaneous translation to French was intermixed with the composition of voices and effects. This was a near 50-minute work but sitting in a context of the longer 'radio journey' available to the ACR's listeners. *Neue Hörspiel* was also a subject of a later program of the ACR ("Le Hörspiel, un art appliqué", September 24, 1979/January 6, 1980): Kagel and Schöning are in conversation with Farabet. Farabet also collaborated with Schöning on some other adapted audio theatre-music works throughout the 1970s and 1980s when both these directors were recognised as leaders of radiophonic experiment and creation in European public broadcasting circles. Composer-writers and sound sculptors such as Gerhard Rühm or the American Bill Fontana created for these two experimental sites, in addition to the aforementioned composer-artists Kagel and Cage. Artists from Australia were invited to make work too: writer-producer Paul Carter and composer-writer Moya Henderson were commissioned by Schöning and Farabet – some of these were co-productions between the ABC and ACR, or ABC and Studio Akustische Kunst.<sup>6</sup> Kaye Mortley visited the ACR on a Fellowship (1978–1979) where she was invited by Trutat to make work (Mortley 2024, 271).

The ACR celebrated radiophonic compositions across the genres by presenting works made in a variety of other workshops as well, for example, the May 14, 1972 ACR represented Fabio Mauri's complete radio opera *Lezione d'inglese* (made in Milan RAI's Fonologia studio – see Malatini 1981, 112) in a French version. *Leçon d'anglais* was of similar length to the original: 2 hours 44 minutes. Here is but one instance where we can recognise how international exchange and co-operation were strong themes of radio and art as this space evolved in European public and state radios in the post-war period. Farabet and Trutat attended major international events and prizes throughout the world where new work of interest to the ACR might be encountered and where ACR productions commenced to make waves and have influence, e.g. The *Prix Italia* (from 1949), then The International Features Conference (IFC) from its inception in Berlin in 1975. European Broadcasting Union (EBU) specialist colloquiums were occasions for airing ideas in documentary-features, *Ars Acustica*, and radio drama. ACR founder Alain Trutat (then Artistic Advisor Radio France and Director of Studies INA) offered an unconventional provocation to the EBU-supported conference, *Rencontres de Tenerife*, organised by Radio Nacional de Espana (1977) which also featured Schöning (WDR), Franco Malatini (RAI), Douglas Cleverdon (BBC Radio Features) and Richard Imison (BBC Radio Drama). Farabet offered sophisticated thinking and ideas on radio, the sonic, listening... to EBU symposia, IFC attendees, or to its associated festivals, masterclasses or workshops and other conferences (often in the form of intimate theatrical provocations). Some of these many performance-texts were later published, but also developed for collections or journals (e.g. Farabet 1979; 1981) while others appeared in his own books (e.g., "Espaces de l'utopie radiophonique" derived from the Strategies de l'Utopie conference, Centre Thomas More (L'Arbresle, Rhone, 1978) (in Farabet 1994b).

<sup>6</sup> Henderson first worked with Stockhausen in his Darmstadt studio, then with Kagel, before proposing a number of experimental music theatre radiophonic works she later made for the ABC (Madsen in Mildorf and Verhulst 2024, 154) from the 1970s to the 2000s.

There is sadly very little translated into English: I note the Special Issue of *Art & Text* on Sound I co-edited with Martin Harrison and Tony MacGregor in 1989 which features "In the Beginning was the Ear" (Farabet 1989).

## Foundation of the ACR: first propositions and the sinuous journey

Why propose an "atelier" to be created in the heart of the national French cultural broadcaster? This *Atelier* was envisaged from its outset as a site dedicated to experiment and research. According to the proposal, drafted in 1968 by Alain Trutat and Jean Tardieu (an eminent poet and director of France Culture – established only five years before the ACR as a public station dedicated quasi-exclusively to culture, knowledge and the spoken word), a new space was required which might continue the (broken) tradition of experimentation and research established with the Studio d'Essai and Club d'Essai from which Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry pioneered a sonic and also radiophonic art form – *musique concrète* (1942–1953).<sup>7</sup> Schaeffer, Tardieu, Trutat and others in France had steered sonic and poetic-dramatic experiments commencing before the Second World War and they had produced a significant output by the 1960s, involving a wide variety of artists, writers and composers. In France the Studio d'Essai (1942–1945, the first experimental studio founded by Schaeffer) became the Club d'Essai (directed by Tardieu, 1946–1960) (Robert 1999, 103). Other comparable musical labs as I have mentioned, designed for radiophonic and musical experiment, evolved under the influence of both these pioneering groupings.

In my interview with Farabet (Paris, 2003), the former director of the ACR recalls its foundational years, explaining the thinking behind this development in French national radio (my transcription text is a mix of English and French):

After the war, the Club d'Essai of the RTF (Radio-Diffusion Française)... was an important thing for the radio. It was perhaps a little literary, rather than radiophonic, but in the Club d'Essai there were a lot of interventions by poets. In this place [*lieu*] – it was a little before I became involved – they had the idea however that radio could be something more than the diffusion of information etc., so they proposed works of the kind that were literary, also where works of art of various kinds could be distributed to the 'grand public'. This was interesting because it was a propulsion into the public sphere of work that might formerly have only existed in small journals, presses etc. This was interesting in and of itself. Jean Tardieu was himself a poet, and a dramatist... He was also very open – quite curious about things. Thus,

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<sup>7</sup> Schaeffer and Pierre Henry in the later 1960s formed the Groupe de Musique Concrète (renamed the Groupe de Recherches Musicales, or GRM). By recording sounds onto tape, and then manipulating and experimenting with these in different ways, they were formulating early building blocks of what later (in the digital era) would become known as 'sampling'. 'Scratching' was also a methodology in the earlier Studio d'Essai and Club d'Essai. This detailed work also formed the basis of the later sphere of *musique acousmatique*.

when the Club d'Essai disappeared, there was this period, a dead time in the radio when they'd lost the spirit of innovation (*esprit d'innovation*) and of exploration (Farabet in Madsen 2001–2004).

Trutat, who co-wrote the proposal (1968) for the ACR, remembers well how:

In 1968 there was no longer any research service at ORTF or experimental radio. Pierre Schaeffer's Studio d'Essai no longer existed. (He had other activities connected to Television.) The Club d'Essai of Jean Tardieu didn't exist any longer either. (He'd also become the director of the station dedicated to music: France Musique.) I thought there was a great lack in the radio as to a place where research on radio could be done... or experimentation... So, I went to see Tardieu (Tardieu who was still in *la Maison* [headquarters of Radio France: short for *Maison de la Radio*], but he was going to retire soon. I thought it was a good opportunity to see him now, especially as the Directeur General of the French radio at the time was not particularly open to such ideas or experimentation [this was Pierre de Boisdeffre, in charge of ORTF (1963–1968)]. I thought Tardieu could help me (Trutat in Madsen 2002).

History here was also feeding into this desire for a new type of radio experiment and working site for reflection, expression and innovation/modernisation, and not only in the forms, machines or apparatus of radio but in the relationships these might have to audiences or listeners. A new atelier rather than a studio, club or lab was deemed important in 1968 not only because a gap was perceived in the schedules and creatively, but because there was a compelling need to attract new (and younger) audiences, plus talent to the radio at a time when television was taking up much of the limelight. Thus, in the proposal this putative program would be broadcast in stereo, comprising "original radiophonic works, works of fiction or music" but it should aim to create something more: "a radiophonic event" with "broadcasts dealing in depth with the key subjects of our time" (Tardieu and Trutat 1968).

Recalling how the ACR might address this break from earlier experiments *and* the increasingly explosive context of French life in 1968, Farabet emphasises how the radio had become moribund during this time of crisis in France: it was no longer responsive to the upheavals or the technologies. He recalled hearing interviews for instance that were completely rehearsed beforehand – they had no element of spontaneity or playfulness. One of these interviews he'd listened to like this was even more ridiculous because it was with the famous surrealist André Breton. While he also recognised there was "Pierre Schaeffer... *musique concrète*... électronique, but this was a little bit apart from the rest" (Farabet in Madsen 2001–2004), Farabet is clear that the radio as he saw it/heard it was: "up to that time in the fridge...frozen...in slippers (*pantoufles*)". Also, "in reality, there was a feeling that effectively something was missing on the level of the purely *radiophonique*, of a *langage radiophonique*" (Ibid.).

Trutat's and then Tardieu's insistence and belief in the idea of an atelier cannot be understated here, as the higher authorities were won over by the detailed *projet* they

proposed (ibid., 1968).<sup>8</sup> With Tardieu more than simply behind it – a co-author – the program concept would be communicated to the very top of the institution (Boisdeffre on April 24, 1968, but earlier “notes” had been shared in December 1967) (in Tardieu and Trutat 1968) and would be soon after given the go ahead. Moreover, it would be well supported with resources and time. At these early stages, a Note to Boisdeffre mentions “the ateliers playing a role adjacent to the old ‘Club d’Essai’” [the plural was used because at first there were to be more than one evening proposed for these ateliers]. Farabet also affirms the importance of Tardieu’s role in the decision:

Thus, we get to Tardieu, who was interested in this idea of proposing works [*“des oeuvres”*] specifically for the radio: *emissions très élaborés* – not simply the usual productions. He wanted to find *original works* [Farabet’s emphasis] conceived for the radio, but these might also create, what he called, *“des événements radiophoniques”* [radiophonic events]... (Ibid.).

The inclusion of the new ACR in the national French radio would be “one of the last acts of Jean Tardieu at the ORTF before he retired in 1969” (ibid., 1996; Preface/ Note to Tardieu and Trutat 1968, in Pradalié and Prot 1996), 147). The *Atelier* had been propelled into being by ideas as much as individuals then, with the context of 1968 itself playing strongly into this. As Farabet reflects here: “68 put into question all of our ideas about radio... we could not simply reproduce ideas that were circulating, instead we would try to provoke, unsettle” ([*provoquer, déranger*] (Farabet 2003, in Madsen 2001–2004). In the very first programs we can hear the street as more than a setting, it is the performance itself as it also becomes a kind of life force; the microphone is also at times a character in the midst of this, or a means of transport into this reality which is also a theatre and a new kind of fiction now supplanting the poets of the studios of the past. Let’s hear from a perceptive insider/outsider in this transformation who might offer us his framing of these events, also a key to the awakening being captured, unveiled, and animated. Michel De Certeau conveys here the profundity of the changes, and accounts for that life as he registers its compulsive birth onto the streets, and with an auditory attentiveness rarely found in other writers of the period:

A kind of festival (what liberation is not a festival?) transformed the inner workings of these days of crisis and violence... Something happened to us. Something began to stir in us. Emerging from who knows where, suddenly filling the streets and factories, circulating among us, becoming ours but no longer being the muffled noise of our solitude, voices that had never been heard began to change us...[W]e began to speak. It seems as if it were for the first time. From everywhere emerged the treasures (De Certeau 1997, 11–12).

8 In Trutat’s words, Boisdeffre responded: “I read your paper, but I don’t understand anything. However, I do think you are right [*vous avez raison*], even as I think there is a lot of nonsense [*connerie*], but you can go ahead [*allez-y*]” (Trutat in Madsen, 2017).

Farabet has written much and spoken at length about this “propulsion” of the ACR into the light and noise of the streets of Paris, indeed out of the soundproofed studios of a more orthodox (but not always polite) radio, responsive to the waves emanating from the “*Événements* of 68”. For example, he is very clear: “I see the ACR as another event of 1968” (in Madsen 2001–2004); or: “it was the 68 *zeitgeist*...radio entering the outside world, the streets...[T]o regain a poetic function in this period, the radio must track the real without fossilizing the event, therefore using a roving microphone [*traquer le réel, sans fossiliser l'événement – utiliser a micro mobile*].” These images are cinematic ones too, recalling the earlier *éclatement* of *cinéma-verité*, the essay film as reflexive, reflective, playing between reality and fiction, and this proposition additional to the Situationists’ poetics and their theatrical *critique/politique* also infusing 1968. Trutat reminds:

The first programme after *La Rentrée* [the return to work after the yearly extended French holiday period July-August] was concerned in the main with the *manifestation* which was called *La Biennale Artistique de Paris*... an international event, new artists... video was just beginning... lots of performances... the time of ‘happenings’... The first collaborators on this programme were René Farabet, Janine Antoine, Viviane van der Broek... and sound engineer, Marcel Grenier... We worked very hard, all night, our facilities weren't very good then... (Trutat in Madsen 2002).

In its first programs the ACR is literally then another part of “the festival” de Certeau describes, opening its microphones to this art of the “happening” – channelling new voices while being a participant in a pageant and picaresque of history in the making. In this way, Farabet had written, the radio could “regain its expressive facility and power, its Dialectic” (Farabet 1972, 20). This event-space and the atelier-programme it tries to create is as much political then as cultural. The events of May 1968 in Paris (strikes, demonstrations, happenings, the presence of the Situationists and poetic-political provocations they also usually had a hand in) also then offer a compelling strand of reasoning behind the proposal to establish something new for/into the schedules of an already more mature and venerated broadcaster, France Culture, not least a purveyor of the ever-evolving national *patrimoine* (heritage). It is perhaps not so surprising that these older more seasoned players/leaders – *hommes de radio*<sup>9</sup> – Tardieu but also Trutat, were so attentive to these forces of change, and boldly responding to them in their proposal. It is also entirely in keeping with their sensibilities and their own development (when we consider their distinctive artistic careers and attitudes to art and the radio).

<sup>9</sup> Literally ‘men of radio’: a common term in the golden age of radio, used in France even until the 1970s and referencing the many writer-producers or writer-directors who became involved in making programs for French radio, and in particular of a cultural type. After World War II, these writers, poets, literary journalists and *hommes de culture* could be found in the state radio. Tardieu, Trutat and even Farabet are a part of this cultural formation. See Ed. Pierre-Marie Héron’s (2001) *Les écrivains hommes de radio (1940-1970)* for a nuanced and detailed exploration of this culture that also sets the scene for the establishment of the *atelier* in 1969.

Trutat produced Beckett's *Tous ceux qui tombent* in 1959 for example, and was an innovator-provocateur well before the ACR, broadcasting that foundational documentary *Bonjour Monsieur Jarry* (co-made by George Charbonnier in 1951). This "radio essai" or *documentaire de création* was concocted to channel Alfred Jarry and his infamous *Ubu Roi* (first staged in Paris in 1896, and inspiration to the Surrealists and Dadaists) and was highly controversial for the RTF at this time.<sup>10</sup> In a very different era (1968) so it is that Trutat takes his "dream" to Tardieu: to give another chance to radio to become "one of the *beaux-arts*":

We had a dream. We considered the radio as one of the 'beaux-arts'. Thomas de Quincy said radio was one of the beaux-arts. That is a little a dream perhaps, because it seems to me that radio does not have the status of art – and partly because we have never had any serious critics (Trutat in Madsen 2002).

Granted at first almost three hours of time for its activities and *essais*, this unusual program with its *longue durée* was almost immediately proposing spaces for "sinuous journeying" and new ways of essaying in sound (Farabet 2003 in Madsen 2001–2004):

It's extremely interesting, I think, this duration question, this space of the long duration. It was said that people wouldn't listen for a very long time... More and more programmes were tending to become shorter, smaller. But for us it was completely the reverse... (Farabet 2003 in Madsen 2001–2004).

Even when the ACR was reduced to two hours from an initial expansive time of the almost three hours it had first been granted, then reduced further to 90 mins (still not insubstantial), the program did not shy away from its pursuit of these kinds of critical provocations – but also let's describe them now as sensuous "itineraries" for the listener (who was always a consideration, perhaps even at times, central).<sup>11</sup> This

<sup>10</sup> At the time of the ACR's founding, Alain Trutat (1922–2006) was Director of Drama for France Culture, the national cultural channel he had helped to found. Trutat created a large body of work in radio from the post-war era of the 1940s as well as directing Drama at France Culture for more than 25 years. Notably, he always sought to open the spaces of the national broadcaster to new thinking, techniques and approaches, championing artists and writers from outside the sound medium. He invited Marguerite Duras, for instance, to create for the radio a new form for her *India Song* (first made for theatre). Before this celebrated film was completed (1975), a radiophonic play for voices was commissioned for l'Office national de radiodiffusion télévision française (ORTF), written and re-visioned for audio, then directed by Georges Peyrou and broadcast 1974 on the ACR. An excerpt is available (Chénetier-Alev 2025). While Trutat also respected the tradition at the French broadcaster of the Studio d'Essai and the Club d'Essai (directed by Tardieu, 1946–1960), with the ACR he did not want to recreate this 'workshop', birthplace of *musique concrète* and a place to experiment for poets, writers and composers. He aimed for a space more inviting to a broader public, as well as to artists, writers and technicians from all fields and forms.

<sup>11</sup> "Dès le début, le projet est donc de ménager un espace de liberté à l'intérieur d'une chaîne soumise à une grille de programmes un peu rigide et de privilégier ainsi la fonction divagante, déroulant de la radio, plutôt que sa fonction informative ou pédagogique" (Farabet 1994, 15). Translation: "From the beginning, the project is then to manage a space of liberty in the interior of a channel which has to submit to the program schedule, this a little bit rigid, and to thus privilege the wandering, unscrolling function of the radio, rather than its informational or pedagogic function".

was a kind of “capricious itinerary” that Farabet tells us allowed for different forms to co-exist in the one space: the interview, the actuality, the “*plan sonore*”, the play, drama, essay, document, the documentary... Thus perhaps here we can come to understand how documentary becomes – and perhaps unexpectedly – a form or project of greater importance than ever before *in sound*. Certainly, this is so with the ACR in French radio, but also in the story of radio art. Alongside experiments in music, we should not overlook the impact of experimentation in radio drama and radio plays. Nor should we misunderstand the role and place of poetic or *auteur* ‘features’ – these “feature length” works only later becoming known as *documentaire de création* in the French national broadcaster. As Trutat explains, the concept “barely existed before the ACR” – perhaps “a precursor” was a “documentary of this type being made about Alfred Jarry... which used *the magnetophone* [tape recorder], and this allowed for montage; thus a relation could be established here with the *pellicule* [tape – but this word is more often used for celluloid film]” (Trutat in Madsen 2002).

Mixing worlds, forms and formats, reality and fiction in these “radiophonic films” and related audio allowed the ACR team to focus on the creation rather than the content, with themes for these journeys offering diverse kinds of “propositions” to listeners who also were enabled to “compose” and create themselves as they accompanied the producer down one trail or another. The listener here is freed to conjure up mental signs and images from the sensory world brought into being by these words and sounds. And so, the wandering function Farabet refers to as a “*vagabondage*” (Farabet, 2003 in Madsen 2001–2004) is crucial here to the ACR from the beginning. The Situationists, active at the time of the ACR’s creation, and behind the events of 1968 as poets, polemicists, activists, philosophers and town planners, might have described this proposal in related terms: for example, they spoke of embarking on walks as transient “passages through varied ambiances” (Debord 1956). This would be part of their pursuit of playful and poetic *dérives* building further on ideas originating with the Romantics (Baudelaire’s *flâneur*), then the Surrealists (think of Breton’s *Nadja*): these became political and cultural ways to counteract “the society of the spectacle” as Debord would dub this newly mediatized and mediated space (1967). This openness of the ACR (from very early on) to these kinds of detours, the *dérive*, the *detournement*, and the longer voyage where the unexpected is an outcome and the listener acknowledged as a creator or composer, continued to be strongly championed in most of the ACR’s work, while at the beginning it offered a kind of counterpoint to the more familiar radio program formatting and division of genres of these stations (and where the listener is more passive as a consumer or as an audience-receiver).

These formats emerging by the late 1960s, we might now acknowledge, were a characteristic of both public and commercial radio outlets around the world, although an entity like France Culture appears to have been more open, even opposed to being identified in this way. One-time France Culture Director, Yves Jaigu, described the ACR as a program space that allowed the cultural channel itself to appear as “an instrument of creation” (1970s, undated, in Autissier and Laurentin 2013, 226). To be in this space

set aside for creation within the supporting matrix (institution) is then also at the very heart of the *Atelier* as it was conceived in 1969 and as it evolved for thirty years after that with a producer-thinker like Farabet, but also with Trutat who sought to re-ignite and re-animate a space of freedom inside the institution, while responding to the new technologies, new ideas and the streets that had become a theatre or *film sonore* to be channelled by microphone and tape, a *mise-en-ondes* from the *mise-en-scène*. This is again the provocation Farabet spoke of, to not only *déranger* (to derange) here, but to *élargir le champs* (widen the scope, enlarge the field) (Farabet 2003 in Madsen 2001–2004).

In this open space, less lab or even electronic studio (men wearing white lab coats), it is striking how the *documentaire de création* becomes an almost primary site for experiment, revelation and research. Especially too the sounding of recorded life, in traces of the real captured and inscribed by tape-recorders into the new broadcasting environment – and for this to touch, and to be apprehended by a new kind of active imaginative listener, a listener that Farabet also has beautifully and richly theorised, imagining through the combined work perhaps of the ACR, but also quite specifically (analytically, poetically, philosophically) explored through his published books, public presentations and other writings. Etienne Noiseaux's words begin to encapsulate for us the significance of Farabet's illuminations here, and his undertaking through the extended "*recherches*" of the ACR over 30 years: "René Farabet talks about radio and sounds in a unique way. His language, rich in imagery and poetry, is probably the only way we can render the complexity of the radiophonic expression" (Phonurgia Nova 2018).

### **Emphasis on documentary creation, sculpting of primary field recordings, "real-fiction"**

Here I would like to stress the importance of portable magnetic tape recorder improvements to sites such as this one, especially when we try to understand this *documentaire de création* project/form as possibly one of the ACR's greatest achievements. Increasingly sophisticated machines (like the Nagra, first used in Radio France, 1955) allowed high fidelity sound scenes to be captured in the field, eventually also in stereo. These *en plein air* recordings would progressively become possible *as longer durations* too – and so potentially constituting auditory equivalents of filmic 'scenes', and especially when placed in the many new "radiophonic films" and montage works, as these long form essays came to be categorised (although primarily by ACR authors). We can firstly cite an early but 'totemic' ACR exemplar, a "mythic" radiophonic documentary (France Culture 2016) *Good Morning Vietnam*, realised/directed by Janine Antoine, but composed/edited/montaged from extensive recordings made during the Vietnam war by photographer journalist Claude Johner (Associated Press, Gamma, New York Times), and composed/arranged, and edited after he had discovered the portable tape recorder

and the revelatory microphone (producer, Alain Trutat).<sup>12</sup> This “‘totem of a documentary’ that has marked the history of radio in France” (France Culture 2016), was pure actuality in long scenes recorded on the move, montaged in sections, produced from more than 50 hours of the war photographer’s wandering recordings (ACR broadcast January 16, 1972).<sup>13</sup>

Barely known outside France, but at least recognised there in the history of national radio and audio documentary, we also encounter ACR team member, maker of *documentaire de création* and sound engineer, Yann Paranthoën, who created an audio homage to the developer of the machine he believed was the catalyst for this new era of radio, and which in its high fidelity and stereo emanations would give to radio he imagined a new identity and future. In Paranthoën’s 1987 program for the ACR, “On Nagra: il enregistrera” [Nagra: I will record], he salutes Stefan Kudelski and his 1951 invention of the first portable professional quality reel-to-reel recorder, writing provocatively: “Radio before the Nagra: was it really radio?”<sup>14</sup> The Nagra, in addition to the 16mm portable movie camera, had already revolutionised documentary cinema in France, and now it was giving a new life to radio, especially cultural radio. Yet, let us not get too carried away by this horizon of possibilities coming with the Nagra,<sup>15</sup> or with the role of magnetic tape and the Nagra in the development of radio’s expressive documentary forms – perhaps an artform as much as mediatic communication and representation. This ‘new wave’ in sound documentary radio has largely been missed by most radio and media historians, at least outside France. I have addressed this development and lack in numerous writings (e.g., Madsen 2005; 2010).

These specialised sites for radiophonic expression and experiment would be known and recognised then not only for fictional or electronic/musical work. The ACR embraced the documentary imagination as I have dubbed it, and this atelier’s achievement can be more amply appreciated when considered in relation to the ‘nonfiction’ realm I would argue: this also demonstrates how the radio arts are not to be confined to one set of forms, genres or formal experiments (see also Madsen 2025). Thus, the sound/actuality document recorded and woven into/through the audio-visionary documentary imagination (developing particularly from the late 1960s in France) might become something other here – as the microphone is used ‘to write’: it is a *micro-stylo* or mi-

<sup>12</sup> Described also evocatively by Pascal Mouneyres for Syntone, September 30, 2016 after the repeat historic broadcast on France Culture, 2016. <https://syntone.fr/good-morning-vietnam-le-souffle-heurte-de-lapocalypse/>

<sup>13</sup> See also Antoine in Madsen, 2017; and the Folkways Records album of the program, FD 5445, (50 minute version) produced with English language description in 1972, which outlines how the documentary set about “resurrect[ing] the whole atmosphere of the war, the American war machine, robot controlled, cold, metallic, like a science fiction harvesting machine, crushing human life, a peaceful village in the High Plateaux, a school, the laughter of children symbolic of life itself. It is not a matter of a series on anecdotal reportages on the war in Vietnam but of a more generalized reportage on the war itself, with two actors – life and Death – the war machine and the Vietnamese... (Johnner, 1972, his notes to the record, Folkways).

<sup>14</sup> Originally broadcast on the *Atelier de création radiophonique*, France Culture, August 9, 1987. See also Paranthoën 1993; and Paranthoën et al 1990. *Propos d’un tailleur de sons*. Arles: Phonurgia Nova.

<sup>15</sup> The Nagra that could synchronize sound with the frames on a reel of film, The Nagra II, revolutionised documentary movie making in the USA. D. A. Pennebaker for instance, recorded Bob Dylan’s 1965 tour using it in his classic *Don’t Look Back*, released in 1967.

crophone-pen, drawing on the *camera-stylo* (camera-pen) analogy already proposed by *Cinéma-verité auteurs* and critics at this time (Astruc 1992). When composed and 'cut' – as with film – audio documentary *création* might be so transformed as to become more than document/s, exceeding also the reduction to analogue imprint or residue of 'the real'. A poetics and 'play' of the real is now proposed and achievable in radio through these new or expanded kinds of works that feature or even privilege actuality recordings in their *mise-en-ondes*, and as these sound scenes are spun into *films sonores* or new *films radiophoniques* (Farabet and Mortley use this term often in my interviews with them and in their own writings, e.g. Mortley 1996). The latter term soon becomes a genre descriptor for work completely formed from field recordings (Pivin), although woven with text at times (Mortley 1996; Mortley 2024). Works like José Pivin's *Cameroon Opera* is described thus in the 1987 ACR retrospective devoted to Pivin: 'José Pivin-Ecoutes', broadcast in the October 4, 1987.<sup>16</sup>

The new *metteurs-en-ondes* working as part of the ACR take up these ideas and a comparable sensibility and approach revealed in the work of the new wave *cinéastes* whose work is much better known today, indeed continues to be quite famous. This is happening in other locations and stations in Europe by the early 1980s, also with the work of the *Atelier* a strong influence. Trutat also confirmed to me the significance of this strand of production within the ACR many years after its foundation, as he reflected: "Documentary is the most interesting of the radiophonic forms... [*C'est la forme radiophonique le plus intéressante*]... When we talk about the *documentaire* of the ACR... it's like the film documentarists, Joris Ivens, Flaherty, Chris Marker, Jean Rouch, Morin, Dziga Vertov – yes, we made an *Atelier* on him" (Trutat in Madsen 2002). Trutat also stresses how the "Nagra was fundamental. It changed everything... After the Nagra there was the possibility to multiply further the possibilities of radio" (Ibid.). In a notebook I still have, Trutat wrote a list of *auteurs* he considered "most important" in this documentary field, and they were all connected to the ACR: Janine Antoine, René Farabet, Yann Paranthoën, George Aperghis and Kaye Mortley. And also sound engineer, Michel Creis. As Mortley notices, "no one works alone especially not in the French studio context" (Mortley, in Madsen, 2017). Trutat advances still more creator names from beyond France (figures such as Georgio Pressburger from the Milan RAI studios) and others experimenting elsewhere in this *nouvelle vague* era.

These makers (including Trutat himself) of diverse and signature works have all made important and memorable pieces of the documentary imagination. Particularly in the European context of public and state broadcasting, this program would receive regular and sustained critical acclaim. Amongst international radio makers it won admirers; it also received many awards, particularly in the documentary-feature category. Its core producers (Farabet, Yann Paranthoën, Janine Antoine, later the Australian Kaye Mortley, also Andrew Orr) and the programs originating here won accolades and prizes, but also influenced a number of broadcasters to establish a new set of ateliers, 'labs',

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<sup>16</sup> Released as a vinyl recording: Ocora, 1984.

studios and 'rooms' modelled on or inspired by the ACR. These were founded mainly from the 1970s and into the 1980s (at the ABC, Australia for example these spaces commenced with Sunday Night Radio 2 in 1972–1973 and ended with *The Listening Room* and *Radio Eye*; in Finland there was the *RadioAtelier*, and the equally sophisticated documentary work of a Barbro Holmberg or Harry Huhtamaki). The ACR program (and those modelled on it) commissioned a wide variety of writers, composers, sculptors, film makers and artists of all kinds from within and outside France, working collaboratively or alone to engender and adapt works into French, or to be part of co-productions with other national broadcasters, the co-funding creating a vibrant ecology as larger scale projects (sometimes in multiple languages) became possible. Authors including Michel Butor, Marguerite Duras, Nathalie Sarraute, plus many composers and Fluxus artists, were invited to make for this space; one of the most significant of these in my view was George Perec, and this connected also with the ACR's yearly collaboration with the Festival d'Avignon (see Autissier and Laurentin 2013). The *Atelier* was represented in 5 DAT tapes given to Madsen by Farabet, 2004. The DAT tapes offer a selection of original work produced for ACR and the Festival of Avignon.

The ACR's radio art achievement is likely to be therefore more graspable as a result of this international influence and in formal terms because of the close attention to the *band* (tape) imprinted with its magnetic reality, and turned towards *auteur* documentary, even filmic modes of creation, montage and essaying. These kinds of audio documentary are of the kind that Farabet, Trutat, Mortley, and many others would reference as "reality-fiction" or "realfiction" (Farabet 1981; Mortley 1981)<sup>17</sup> and their makers would also go on to win many awards for works of this kind they made – drawing, channelling, illuminating with the microphone (see Madsen 2023). The ACR's approach to *documentaire de création* draws on varying and international traditions and strands of thought and making here however, but poses its own originality as it enlarged the space for radio and audio expression through the illuminations offered in its finely calibrated and ultimately poetic *mixages* between reality and fiction, complexifying and extending our conceptions of the radio space as a fertile and rich site for a new art.

While the ACR's role would be disruptive then – overturning older formats and breaking free of the radio 'grid' that kept fiction from nonfiction, radio drama from features and documentary, and lastly poetry from journalistic forms, the journey would rarely be jarring (or not for long) as the listener is also to be courted through story, voicing and the weaving of sound scenes: there is a beauty to be encountered in the sounds and voices, in these extended *paysages* (landscapes) and knitting of the strands (to "*tricoter*" and to draw on rhapsodic weavings) in these poetic but also (just beneath the

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17 As to the sounding landscape captured by our microphones, Farabet writes it is not a given, as reality, more... it becomes for him "a fantastic universe... and there are strategies that are musical and strategies that are dramatic". Translated from "*un univers fantastique en proie à la disproportion...un espace strié, dont la topographie fausse détermine: une stratégie musicale de l'écoute et également, une stratégie dramatique de l'écoute: ce milieu sonore est à la fois permanent et instable. À chaque instant, un événement peut éclater, et nous sommes livrés à une sorte de jeu d'attente. Nous sommes dans un univers diegetique, peut-être gouverner par un maître du suspense, par un dieu de la fiction*" (Farabet 1981, 76).

surface) political and fundamentally ethically-reflexive provocations (Farabet, 2003 in Madsen 2001–2004). In this space opened up for listening and the new listener, the ACR perhaps has heard the ideas of philosopher Gaston Bachelard who proposed a certain kind of radio as being therapeutic not long after the Second World War. He was invited by the radio institution in 1949 to reflect on this in a period of rebuilding and re-imagining when it was thought this could not easily happen (in France, was poetry possible after Vichy, after the Shoah?). This invoking of Bachelard (and it is there in Farabet's own developing philosophy of the radio in his writings) allows me to now speak briefly of the possible impact of such thought on the ACR and perhaps also to the resonances I discovered still persisting in the archives and through these preliminary reflections.<sup>18</sup>

### Bachelardienne reverie and the radio: the ACR's resounding

In 1951 Gaston Bachelard wrote one small essay on the radio: "Rêverie et Radio" (in Bachelard, 1970). The renowned French philosopher asked rhetorical questions about the future of radio: was it possible that a kind of radio space-time be devoted to the nurture of the unconscious? Could the prevailing codes of the time (which seemed to divide radio into information, education, reality, and entertainment) be altered just a little to accommodate another kind of radio – something compositional and imaginative (in its most concrete sense) as well as therapeutic? Was there the space to develop a radio which, "on each wave", would touch and caress this "inner space of the listener" using what Bachelard had called the "principle of reverie"? (Bachelard 1951, 218). For Bachelard, radio was the ideal medium in which the possibility of an opening and a refuge might be offered to a listener – simultaneously an intense and easeful listening revealing "the essence of intimate reverie" (Ibid., 219). For Bachelard, this radio of sounds "well made" might return the *auditeur* to something like a "nocturnal" (Ibid., 223) world of their own making as much as to a daylight world in which words and sounds are created, captured and manipulated by a radio producer or writer. In the Bachelardian "proposition" to the radio, the radio engineer would give way to a new type of engineer, a "psychic engineer" (Ibid., 218), who could speak "to the inner psyche in the manner of the poet". "[T]he listener might hear but no longer strain too much to listen." (All quotes in: *ibid.*, 221). Images of the house, the cave, an attic, the night, are evoked in this idea of intimate reverie, and these ideas were to be resounded in the *Atelier* of twenty years later. As Farabet explains:

One doesn't listen to this kind of radio as if one were dreaming, but to recall Bachelard; it's more like reverie. Unlike the dreamer, however, this radio listener has some conscious control over the images; he has the possibility of ferrying a little his own boat (Farabet in Madsen 2001–2004).

<sup>18</sup> In the program (*Je suis venu pour écouter*, July 1, 1979) of the ACR, Farabet included the words of Bachelard from his 1951 essay, "Rêverie et Radio" (originally broadcast in the Club D'Essai in 1948).

In this space dedicated to sustaining what Farabet and others describe as a “compositional listening”, the ear is given its freedom to drift and (in Bachelard’s terms) an imaginative “constellating power” (Bachelard 1943, 227).<sup>19</sup> This is a form of radio (as Bachelard suggested) able to produce mental images. The radio “film” not only unwinds, moving past us like film, it also allows the listener “to see” mental images which open onto a perhaps invisible yet resonant interior that might also be felt and experienced. These images while “less exact perhaps...remain images nevertheless – at the interior of the sounds. At the interior of the voices there is this circulation of images, and also this constant continuity, which does not stop. Even the silence continues – always this unwinding” (Farabet in Madsen 2002–2004).

The ACR’s central proposition has always been one fundamentally tied to opening up the space of listening and auditory experience for a real person, not a formal, academic or overly aesthetic delineation or framing at all, even as an aesthetical stance, or a response to sounds, the spaces in between, the silences...also shapes what we ultimately hear. This listening is considered compositional (for the listener and the producer) and for the ACR must be open to the “chance encounter,” and that “vagabond space” Farabet continued to promote, even after he had left the *Atelier* long behind him. If we begin to dig into this past, unearth and reconnect the writings in sound connected to this project, or the works and ideas produced through this atelier as I have commenced to do here, we are likely to encounter an expanded concept of the radiophonic imaginary and its as yet unfulfilled, still latent audio-visionary potential. This “research” and these *essais* furthermore speak to the new audio media ecology today (radio, podcast and beyond), again to provoke or remind us that the “radiophonic imaginary” is detectable in these places too, and therefore far from silenced or exhausted (Madsen 2023). Re-encountering the ACR today (traces are accessible on many sites, archives and works) is aimed at acquainting reader-listeners with this extraordinary output and body of sustained creation which still reaches into a host of sites around the world and the radiophonic memory.<sup>20</sup> This encounter has also tried to convey the sense of beauty of these (it seems) always evanescent gestures, and the sophisticated propositions made through the audio-visionary microphone, opened as it was here, to the world and to the imagination.

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<sup>19</sup> In *L’Air et les Songes* (Librairie José Corti, Paris, 1943) Bachelard refers us to the universe as it is poetically apprehended by human culture. The imagination is a primary force, says Bachelard (1943, 229). The constellations – purely figures of an imaginary consciousness with no scientific truth – nevertheless possess or emit a primary “constellating power” – which opens the dreamer still further to these dark spaces “illuminated by the imaginary which has produced them in the first place.” [Le] rêve constellant tire des lignes imaginaires’. (227) and ‘[L]a nuit étoilé est ma constellation. Elle me donne la conscience de mon pouvoir constellant.’ (229)

<sup>20</sup> Listen to Farabet’s *Words from Inside (St Maur Prison): An exploration of listening and liberty* (along with English translation) on Radio Atlas: <https://www.radioatlas.org/words-from-inside-st-maur-prison/>.

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### **PROPOSITIONS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE RADIO AS ATELIER: IMAGINING A NEW RADIO AND A NEW LISTENER IN THE LIFE OF THE ATELIER DE CRÉATION RADIOPHONIQUE OF RADIO FRANCE (summary)**

This article offers an encounter with the experiments and ideas that emerged from one of twentieth century radio's great artistic and exploratory sites, the *Atelier de création radiophonique* (ACR) of Radio France. This weekly program was launched within the French broadcasting outlet, France Culture, under the direction of Alain Trutat in 1969. Its brief at the time was to imagine and broadcast new forms of radio, cross boundaries in craft and genre, and re-invent or create new dialogues with radio's older forms. In doing this it should, as the figure of the artist's atelier suggests, offer "a space where one might be invited to try out ideas freely," and "see things in the process of being made" (René Farabet interviewed by the author, 2003). This *Atelier* was envisaged from its outset as a site dedicated to experiment and research. According to the proposal, drafted in 1968 by Trutat and Jean Tardieu (poet and director of France Culture), a new space was required which might continue the (broken) tradition of experimentation established with the earlier Studio d'Essai and Club d'Essai (1942–1960) from which Pierre Schaeffer developed his *musique concrète*. Such a program was deemed important in terms of attracting new talent and younger audiences to the radio at a time when television was taking up much of the limelight. This program, wrote Tardieu and Trutat in their proposal, should comprise "original radiophonic works, works of fiction or music" but should also aim to create something more: "a radiophonic event" with "broadcasts dealing in depth with the key subjects of our time" (1968). A direct response to the upheavals of May 1968 in France, this unusual program in the heart of the public institution would be granted almost three hours of time for its multiple 'essais', engaging a huge number of artists from France and beyond as it evolved. Unlike other radio programs of this same era, this was a show of the "longue durée", gifted with three hours of time to propose to the listener "sinuous journeys" that mixed worlds, forms and formats, allowing for a "vagabondage" as Farabet described his approach (all quotes, Ibid.). By the early 1970s this show was attracting interest internationally,

achieving critical acclaim. Yet, impacts and legacies of the program, as suggested by the author, have received insufficient attention (particularly beyond France) even as other broadcasters from Australia to Finland were inspired to create new kinds of work or establish a set of ateliers modelled strongly on the *ACR*. Re-encountering this site today in its historical context acquaints readers with the program's sustained creation over more than 30 years under the leadership of Farabet and Trutat, while also introducing a sense of the sophistication of its provocations and gestures as producers sought to explore new ways of making, or new radiophonic forms. A new idea of the listener, the radio documentary and *film sonore* was proposed in this "*chantier*" (as Farabet described this theatre-like, yet also film-like space: for him this was a "building site"). Drawing on the author's primary research embedded in a wider study of the radiophonic imagination and making a case for the importance of oral history work like this which preserves the trajectories, knowledges and practices of some of radio's leading pioneers and audio-visionaries, this article offers an overview of the *ACR*, and contextualisation. Digging into this rich site within media and art history we discover a neglected but connected part of the wider international history of the medium. We can also register an expanded concept of the radio and the listener, as listeners – as if for the first time – are invited in as co-creators by the *Atelier's* producer-artists.